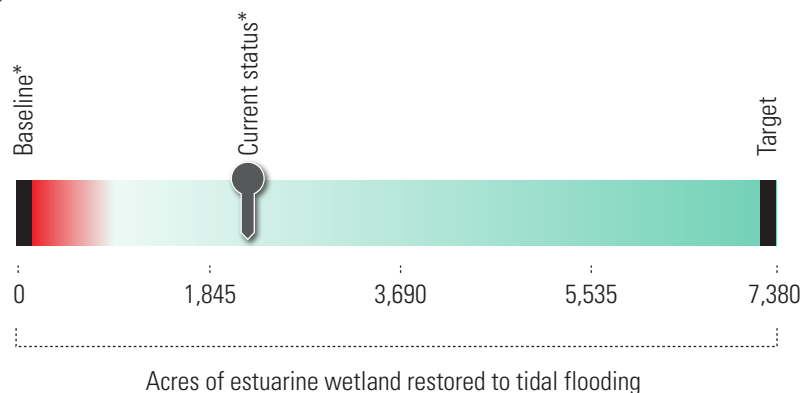


Estuaries

Area of estuarine wetlands restored to tidal flooding

Progress Toward the 2020 Target

7,380 quality acres of estuarine wetlands are restored basin-wide, which is 20 percent of total estimated restoration need.



*Status is the total area of estuarine wetlands restored to tidal flooding since 2006 in the large river deltas of Puget Sound. We set the baseline to zero, as the starting point in 2006 for totaling acres restored.

Is There Progress Toward the 2020 Target?

There has been incremental progress in restoring river estuaries in Puget Sound. Every year, we restore tidal flow to river delta wetlands. We estimate that approximately 2,260 acres of estuarine river delta wetlands have been restored to tidal flooding since 2006, or about 31 percent of the 2020 target. Since we last reported on this indicator in 2012, 210 acres, or almost 3 percent of the 2020 target, were restored in the Skagit and Stillaguamish river deltas (respectively, Fisher Slough and Port Susan Bay).

Each project and watershed characterizes estuary restoration differently and project reporting is scattered and inconsistent. Consequently, we report these data as an approximation of actual area restored. However, initial work by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to standardize tracking of estuary restoration in large river deltas suggests that our current acreage estimate is fairly accurate.

Estimated Area of Estuarine Wetland Restored to Tidal Flooding 2006-2012

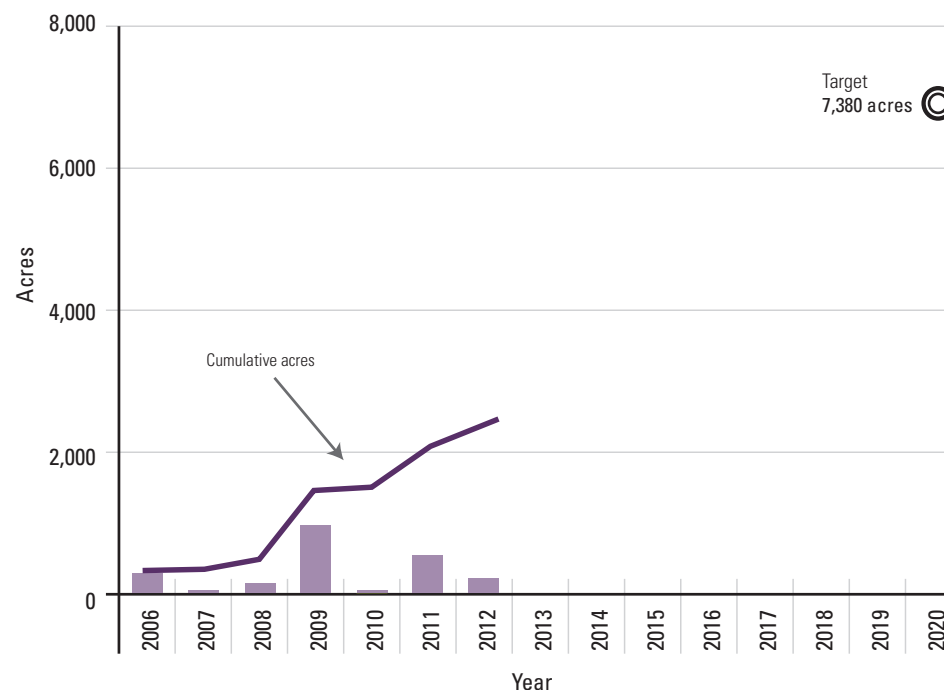


Figure 3.13. Approximate acres of estuarine lands where tidal flow was reported as restored in 2006 to 2012 in 16 major Puget Sound river estuaries.

Source: Project Information System (PRISM), Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office

Large acreage projects have been concentrated on the Dungeness, Quilcene, Skokomish, Skagit, Nooksack, Stillaguamish, and Nisqually river deltas. In particular, work in the Quilcene, Skokomish, and Nisqually have restored almost to the full extent of historical tidal flows. While substantial projects have been completed in the Nooksack, Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish estuaries, these efforts remain modest when compared to the mammoth historical extent of these river deltas. Many smaller projects have been completed in the industrialized Duwamish and Puyallup river deltas as a result of salmon recovery actions as well as Natural Resource Damage Assessments linked to Superfund cleanups.

Roughly 1,200 acres of restoration are anticipated over the next five years. At this rate, we are not likely to reach the 2020 target. Project work is constrained by limited human resources, unpredictable capital funding flows, and social conflicts over returning low lying farmland to the tides.

Indicator Lead:

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For more in-depth information, please see:

www.psp.wa.gov/vitalsigns/estuaries.php